

Casualties of Heritage Distancing

Children, Ch'orti' Indigeneity, and the Copán Archaeoscape

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The archaeological park of Copán, located in western Honduras, was a seat of Classic Maya dynastic power and currently is the nexus of a complex intersection of the past with the present. While the monumental core of Copán is protected by World Heritage status, archaeological remains outside park boundaries are increasingly under threat of destruction. This situation is exacerbated by forces of alienation that distance Ch'orti' Maya peoples from pre-Hispanic cultural heritage and a national identity that valorizes a Classic Maya past but not contemporary indigenous peoples. Such heritage distancing—evident in a public school curriculum that undervalues the precolonial past—has negative consequences for the conservation of cultural heritage in the Copán Valley. Examined here is a collaborative education program that balances heritage education with site conservation and creates space for a dialogue about the value of the past. Designed for Ch'orti' children living near Copán, the initiative employs creative and participatory methodologies, which are considered in reference to the tensions within what is referred to as the Copán “archaeoscape” and in light of the indigenous politics of Honduran Ch'orti' communities. The long-term impact of this education initiative bears upon the future of an indigenous archaeology within the Maya region.

The archaeological park of Copán, Honduras, enjoys global renown. Formerly a seat of Classic Maya dynastic power, the remains of its royal court include soaring pyramids, stone-chiseled naturalistic sculpture, and hieroglyphic texts that bear testimony to an ancient heritage (Fash 2001). The distancing of this heritage from local Ch'orti' communities, however, is the result of more than time and chemical weathering. A popular discourse of Classic Maya “extinction” in the southern lowlands of the Maya region has created a rupture between the deep past and present (Cojtí Ren 2006:11; McAnany and Gallareta Negrón 2009), and powerful forces of alienation have resulted in a public school curriculum that contains scant

references to the diverse ethnic heritage of Honduras (Barahona 1998:29). Honduran national identity extols the Classic Maya past amid racialization of African American and indigenous populations (Euraque 2004).

Efforts by Ch'orti' activists to engage in and benefit from the management of the World Heritage site of Copán only recently have been acknowledged by the Honduran state as valid claims. Such heritage distancing—defined here as the alienation of contemporary inhabitants of a landscape from the tangible remains or intangible practices of the past—not only denies the heritage rights of indigenous peoples but also endangers the conservation of ancestral landscapes. Here we examine Ch'orti' claims for indigeneity in reference to cultural heritage and present the results of an education program that strives to balance heritage education with archaeological conservation. Developed collaboratively for the underserved population of Ch'orti' children, this initiative has produced a remarkable change in the knowledge of and perspectives on the past within a relatively short period of time.

In past decades, anthropologists—and archaeologists in particular—have adopted a landscape perspective on agency

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and ethnicity (David and Thomas 2008). Appadurai (1996) employs the term “ethnoscape” to describe the “persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live” (33), which includes tourists, immigrants, refugees, guest workers, and other groups. To emphasize the palimpsest imprint of agency on landscape over time and the interlock between technical practices and sociality, Ingold (1993) uses the term “taskscape” (158). Di Giovine (2009) created the term “heritagescape” to describe the “newly ordered social structure” (6) created by UNESCO’s global web of World Heritage sites. Perhaps most useful in the context of Copán, however, is Parks’s (2010) characterization of the web of communities and temporalities surrounding an archaeological site as an “archaeoscape” (437), which she defines as the physical and ideological intersection of the past with the present.

In an archaeoscape, places of cultural heritage as well as actors (or stakeholders) impact and are impacted by prehistoric and historical remains (Parks 2009:4–7). As in Appadurai’s ethnoscape, archaeoscapes are populated by a variety of interest groups that—at Copán—include archaeologists, representatives of the state, indigenous peoples, local residents, and tourists. Interacting with the remains of the Classic-period Maya city, these communities engage in a dialectic with the past that alters its interpretation and management while reimagining their own relationships to it and with one another. This dynamic and iterative quality of archaeoscape is visible in political statements about heritage rights expressed by Ch’orti’ activists at the archaeological park of Copán, including their assertion of an ancestral connection to the site (Maca 2009; Metz 2010; Mortensen 2009a), and in the heritage-education efforts in which the authors have collaboratively engaged.

Agency to effect change in an archaeoscape as well as claims on its materiality are not distributed evenly across interest groups. Heritage distancing is a long-term structural process that is materialized in the archaeoscape. The monumental core of Copán is claimed by the nation-state of Honduras; state representatives manage the archaeological park for tourism and research. The state, together with archaeologists and preservation specialists, works to conserve its venerable structures (Fash and Fash 1997). At the same time, this zone of controlled access has become a symbol of and staging ground for ethno-political expressions of indigeneity by local Ch’orti’ people who inhabit spaces on the periphery of the Copán Valley. This political movement is indicative of the larger process of “reethnification” (Logan 2009:405) and has embroiled the monumental core of Copán and smaller pre-Hispanic sites throughout the Copán Valley in a high-stakes battle for indigenous self-determination and cultural autonomy. The marketing of Copán as a world-class tourism destination by the nation-state of Honduras as well as the ambivalent national embrace of “Mayanization” (Euraque 2004; Joyce 2003) compounds the complexity of relationships between Ch’orti’ activists and representatives of the state.

This article focuses on Ch’orti’ identity in the Department

of Copán, Honduras. Both a casualty and a construction of the heritage distancing that accompanies colonialities of power, political assertions of Ch’orti’ indigeneity have increased substantially since 1994, when Honduras ratified the International Labor Organization’s (ILO’s) Convention 169 (Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries). In response to an increased interest in cultural heritage on the part of Honduran Ch’orti’ people, we proposed a heritage-education program that was intended to familiarize children with the archaeologically constructed past of Copán, to celebrate local indigenous identity, and to engage with archaeological research. This activity falls under the rubric of engaged anthropology, diverse dimensions of which are discussed by Low and Merry (2010). The underlying philosophy of this initiative is that access by indigenous peoples to the means by which archaeological knowledge is constructed provides tools for critical inquiry and empowerment. This program, developed collaboratively with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) called Arte Acción Copán Ruinas (AACR), is evaluated here in reference to the Copán archaeoscape.

Ch’orti’ Maya and the Copán Archaeoscape

Even before the 1989 codification of indigenous rights in ILO Convention 169, anthropologists grappled with the idea of indigeneity, argued for and against its validity, acknowledged its exclusivity, and noted that the absence of a clear definition of the term affected the ability of groups to identify as indigenous—in either essentialist or constructivist terms (Borgstede and Yaeger 2008; Corntassel 2008; Daes 2008; Levy 2006:137). Despite troubling entanglements between late capitalism and the construction of indigeneity, many stress that the indigenous “frame” adequately characterizes situations in which acute differences in power can be mapped upon colonial expansion and the modernist enterprise. Both Levy (2006) and Hinton (2002) observe that denying power differences between indigenous and dominant groups does not make them disappear and runs the risk of normalizing difference as an unmarked category. Hinton (2002:8–9) suggests that indigenous peoples were created as the inverse of “civilized” within the metanarrative of modernity. In global application, the concept of indigeneity presupposes that certain people around the world share a common, collective experience (Corntassel 2008; Merlan 2009:303).

Initially, indigeneity indicated a “first-order” relationship between a community and a local landscape, but in an effort to remove its primordial taint the concept has been expanded to refer to groups that have been colonized or subjected to treatment by nation-states or the international community that is considered immoral or exclusionary (Daes 2008:33; Merlan 2009:304). Groups that self-identify as indigenous variably express their identity by cultural, socioeconomic, and/



Figure 1. Map of the Maya region showing the Ch'orti' area that spans the international borders of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The solid triangle marks the location of Parque Arqueológico Copán. Also shown in lighter shading is the area of other Maya ethnolinguistic groups (after Metz 2006; adapted by Pablo Robles).

or political features (Daes 1996:22; Martínez Cobo 1986). Indigeneity throughout the Maya region—or, as K'iche' scholar Valle Escalante (2009) has recently termed it, “Maya nationalisms”—are complexly varied and perhaps most strongly voiced in the highlands of Guatemala, where 3 decades of civil strife and genocidal violence resulted in a peace accord that created space for the expression of indigenous identity, spirituality, and self-determination within the political process (Cojtí Ren 2006; Frühsorge 2007; Montejo 2002).

The reethnification taking place in the region inhabited by Maya descendents (southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and western Honduras) often includes a struggle for freedom of cultural expression and spirituality, political autonomy, renewed land rights, and access to ancestral places (Fischer and Brown 1996; McAnany 2010:47–58). These contemporary as-

sections of ethnic and indigenous identity are linked historically to the political processes of both colonialism and nation building and to the corollary erosive forces of identity annihilation (Hinton 2002). Nation building has been particularly divisive for the Ch'orti', one of more than two dozen Maya ethnolinguistic groups (French 2010). Specifically, the dissection of the nineteenth-century landscape into three independent states—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—fractured the colonial Ch'orti' community (fig. 1; Metz, McNeil, and Hull 2009). While Ch'orti' people included within the Guatemalan state were able to partially retain their language and traditional practices (Metz 2006), those living in the western Honduran departments of Copán and Ocoatepeque have faced a number of challenges to their identity, including a pervasive national ideology of *mestizaje* (homog-

enization of ethnic groups; see Euraque 2004; Gonzalez 1998), and an educational system that institutionalized indigenous extinction in the national narrative. Language, dress, and other outward signifiers associated with indigenous identity are not frequently heard or seen in Copán or Ocotepeque, although identification of indigenous peoples as *indios* (a pejorative term for indigenous) and self-identification as Ch'orti' remain common (Loker 2009:242; Metz 2009:165).

In 1994, after a century of increasingly obscure ethnic identity, the Honduran Ch'orti' community founded an organization called the National Indigenous Council of the Maya-Ch'orti' of Honduras (CONIMCHH). Its inception came on the heels of a national movement for indigenous rights (the National Confederation of Autochthonous Peoples of Honduras, or CONPAH), a Honduran variant of a larger movement characterized by Ronald Niezen (2003) as "indigenism" (4–5; distinct from the *indigenismo* of early twentieth-century Mexico; the latter term refers to the co-optation of pre-Hispanic symbols and interpretations as a tool to eradicate cultural difference and create national identity). The 1989 ILO convention had established ground rules for ethical interaction between indigenous peoples and nation-states on issues of human rights, such as respect for indigenous spirituality, allowance of public religious ceremonies, and honoring of cultural traditions and expressions. As this convention and others were ratified by nations around the world (by Honduras in 1994), it shifted the balance of power and opened spaces for grassroots political mobilization and presentation of grievances surrounding past usurpations of land. Although compliance with international agreements that promote diversity (such as ILO Convention 169) are voluntary, the failure of developing nations to ratify such conventions can have major consequences in terms of international aid, trade agreements, and other economically vital resources (Niezen 2003: 36–50).

Mortensen (2005:65–72, 2009a:249–250) describes the emergence of CONIMCHH in the western districts of Copán and Ocotepeque as being founded upon an indigenist framework that emphasized land restitution, cultural revitalization, and political activism. CONIMCHH included at least three different types of communities: those in which all members identified as Ch'orti', those in which all identified as *ladino* (mixed indigenous and European), and those in which some identified as Ch'orti' and some as *ladino*. Community leaders decided whether to associate with CONIMCHH. Mortensen (2005:67) suggests that at times this decision had more to do with territorial protection and the prospect of economic benefit than with cultural revitalization. Communities that did not associate, regardless of their ethnic identity, received no benefit from the organization's efforts, while those that chose to associate received access to improved education and other much-needed infrastructure and programs (L. Mortensen, personal communication, 2006).

While Honduran Ch'orti' identity is complex and diversely expressed, it does follow the general trends of the

indigenous-rights discourse of self-determination—broadly construed as autonomy over local political processes, control of land and natural resources, and the right to self-representation (Sylvain 2002:1079). A primary goal of Honduran Ch'orti' is the acquisition of subsistence farmland that leaders argue was coercively usurped during the previous century. Today, large landowners control more than 90% of agricultural land in western Honduras (Mortensen 2005: 260). Leaders of CONIMCHH argue that Copán's site core, land presently protected as an archaeological park, was once worked by Ch'orti' farmers.

As one of the stakeholders in the complex web that is the Copán archaeoscape, CONIMCHH activists have a complex relationship with the monumental core of Copán. By claiming a privileged connection to the site of Copán, CONIMCHH has successfully placed its indigenous agenda before the eyes of the state and the international community. Until the founding of CONIMCHH, the site of Copán was rarely (publicly) claimed by the Ch'orti' as a sacred ancestral site. In recent years, however, CONIMCHH leaders have reimagined this tourist mecca as a stage for the assertion of Ch'orti' culture and spirituality. On four major occasions—in 1998, 2000, 2005, and 2009—such assertions accompanied the occupation of the entrance to the gated archaeological park by hundreds of Ch'orti' individuals and sympathizers. Although these occupations typically last less than 24 hours, the impact on daily gate revenues as well as disruption to the tourism industry and consequently to a primary source of income for the town of Copán Ruinas is profound and serves to highlight the Ch'orti' struggle for self-determination and cultural survival. In this sense, the site core has become a symbol of the longevity and resilience of the Ch'orti' in Honduras.

Not surprisingly, CONIMCHH's repeated occupation of the archaeological park has resulted in conflict among residents of the Copán Valley. In 2000, the occupation sparked violence among police (who used tear gas), angry townspeople, and Ch'orti' strikers (Mortensen 2005:258–277). This friction has not been ineffectual in terms of attracting national and international attention.¹ Relationships among CONIMCHH, the state, archaeologists, and others who have a stake in the Copán archaeoscape remain precarious and are often characterized by distrust. In 2009, a portion of the Ch'orti' community splintered from CONIMCHH to establish an independent organization (Maca and Perez 2010). This fissure shattered the imaginary of a unified Ch'orti' indigenous community in search of primordial rights to land and culture.

At times, the efforts of Ch'orti' leaders to acquire farmland for their community and the deployment of ancestral Maya heritage as a symbol of Ch'orti' identity conflict with other stakeholders of the Copán archaeoscape who are vested in the conservation of archaeological sites. Although parceling land

1. "Indigenas Ocupan Parque Aqueológico en Demanda de Tierras" published in *Agencia Pulsar*, September 13, 2005. For the full text, see <http://www.agenciapulsar.org/nota.php?id=5842>.

for small farm holdings does not devastate archaeological heritage in the same way as mechanized agriculture and the development of tourism infrastructure, it does have an impact on the conservation of the pre-Hispanic remains that are ubiquitous across the local landscape. For example, the community of Rincón del Buey, established to allot land and house sites to an underserved and landless population, was sited directly on top of two Late Classic Maya sites (Ostuman and Cerro de la Zona; fig. 2). Maca and Perez (2010) detail this action and point to the need for stronger dialogue among archaeologists, governmental institutions, and local people regarding places of pre-Hispanic heritage outside of the protected park. In an inadvertent manner, the past was devalued, and its material remains assumed too distant from the site center and too diminutive to be of concern. Balancing benefit to historically marginalized peoples with conservation of tangible heritage might be achievable if there were more dialogue among interest groups of the Copán archaeoscape.

Endangered Landscapes of the Past

The activism of CONIMCHH trains a spotlight on conflicts within the Copán archaeoscape, most notably the tension between transnational valuation as a UNESCO World Heritage site and local valuation as an ancestral Ch'orti' site. In

effect, the monumental core is instantiated simultaneously as ancestral heritage, a national tourist destination, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Considering and critiquing the totalizing concept of a United Nations site register has become a minor academic industry (see Di Giovine 2009). On the other hand, it is fair to ask who benefits and who and/or what is excluded when the past is globalized (Dearborn and Stallmeyer 2010). Although this is a vital issue, we want to shift emphasis to the conservation of unprotected places that ring the World Heritage site of Copán. Despite the valorization of this Classic Maya site, many nearby and less monumental places of heritage have been devastated by looting, urbanization, or agricultural and infrastructural development within the past 50 years. This problem is not unique to Copán or even to the Maya region, but unfortunately few sustainable solutions for bolstering comprehensive heritage conservation have been devised (Brodie and Renfrew 2005; Parks, McAnany, and Murata 2006). A basic premise of this article is that within the Copán Valley a solution to the challenge of heritage conservation can be sustained only through enfranchisement of indigenous peoples in the heritage-making process and iterative dialogue about the balance between site conservation and human livelihoods. However, in the Maya region overall there is extremely limited dialogue about the

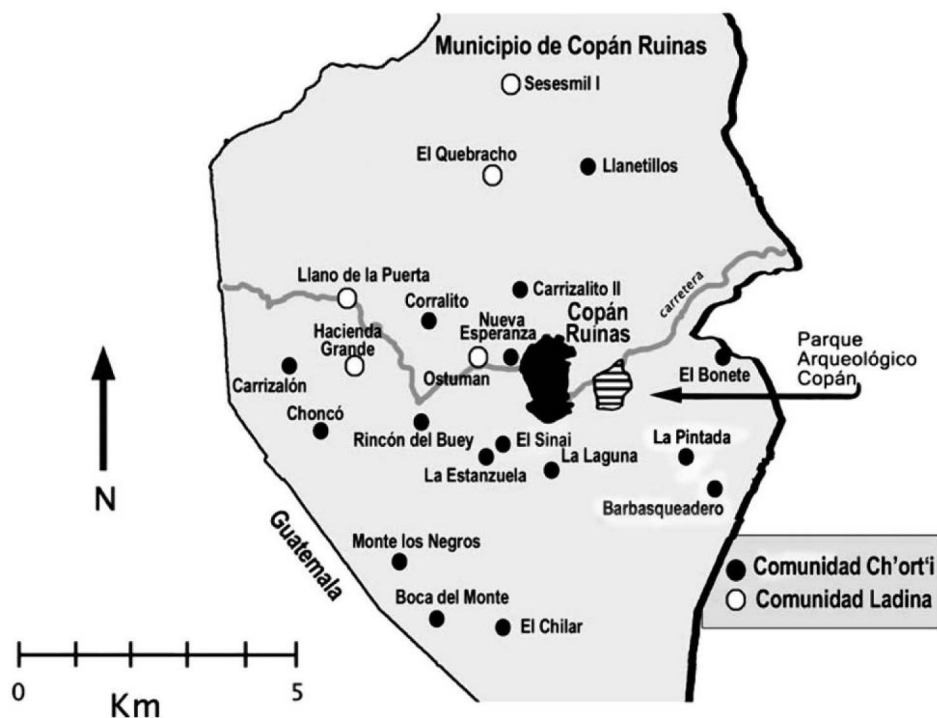


Figure 2. Communities (both Ch'orti' and *ladino*) around Parque Arqueológico Copán that participate in school-based workshops on Maya cultural heritage, including the town of Copán Ruinas (illustration by Carin Steen; adapted by Pablo Robles).

role of indigenous archaeology and of collaborative conservation efforts that might advance sustainable solutions (Cojtí Ren 2006:14–17; Cojtí Ren 2010). The most active dialogue occurs within Guatemala, where a sacred-sites law is under consideration (Gomez 2010). Rather, discourse has tended to focus on the livelihood claims that indigenous communities make on archaeological landscapes (Breglia 2006).

In a proximate sense, urbanization, agricultural development, and looting—whether organized or opportunistic (Matsuda 1998; Parks, McAnany, and Murata 2006:427)—are responsible for the loss of pre-Hispanic heritage. The underlying cause of damage and destruction, however, can be linked directly to the disenfranchisement of local communities from a distant past and the absence of dialogue about the significance and value of pre-Columbian heritage beyond that of commodification for tourism or black-market antiquities collectors. Whereas local places of cultural significance might have once served as wellsprings of reflexive or assertive identity, colonial and postcolonial immigration and forced relocation separated many communities from ancestral places and associated oral histories. In highland Guatemala, for instance, many intangible and portable aspects of indigenous heritage—such as language, dress, and ritual practices—survived centuries of devastation, but direct links to places of heritage have in many cases been severely attenuated. In the Maya region, the deep past has become something that is constructed primarily by the Western cultural logic of archaeology that for the most part is foreign and inaccessible to indigenous communities. As K'iche' scholar Avexnim Cojtí Ren (2006) puts it, “Sadly and unfortunately, the history of our people has also been colonized” (10). It is not hyperbole to state that descendants today find themselves in a position in which they must “reclaim” their rights to ancestral places if such rights are to be considered relevant (Parks and McAnany 2007).

Although the assault on ancient Maya places has been well documented for decades (e.g., Coggins 1969, 1998, 2002; Fash 1994; Gilgan 2001; Luke and Henderson 2006; Matsuda 1998; Paredes Maury 1998; Pendergast 1991), archaeologists working in the Maya area, like their colleagues elsewhere, have been slow to formulate lasting solutions to curb site destruction and promote conservation. The program described below is guided by the premise that democratizing archaeological knowledge and creating opportunities for expressing indigenous identities and how conceptions of self might be connected to a deeper past provide a pathway through the landscape of endangered sites and toward a sustainable solution.

Addressing Heritage Distancing

The absence of indigenous histories and cosmologies in dominant educational and religious pedagogies plays a role in the devaluation of Maya cultural heritage (Valle Escalante 2006). Throughout the Maya region, European and nationalist histories are given primacy; pre-Hispanic history is regarded as a curiosity—a flash of genius in what was otherwise a place

of civilizational inferiority peopled by *indios* (Cojtí Ren 2006: 11–12). Many Ch'orti' children and adults never learn about the achievements of their ancestors; many never even realize that the people responsible for the construction of places like Copán actually were their ancestors. Among Ch'orti' people, such alienation is profoundly ironic, since epigraphers have amassed linguistic evidence that an ancestral version of Ch'orti' Mayan likely was the spoken language of Classic Maya royal courts and was also the language in which hieroglyphic texts were written (Houston, Robertson, and Stuart 2000; Law et al. 2009).

The Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative (MACHI; <http://www.machiproject.org>), founded by the coauthors in 2006 and funded by a philanthropist, adopted an activist stance in reference to mitigating the rapid destruction of archaeological heritage in the Maya region and addressing the centuries-old pattern of heritage distancing. The two objectives were conceived as entwined; success in the latter might resonate in a positive way with the former intractable challenge of site conservation. Through local collaborations, MACHI sought to generate programs of both formal and informal education that facilitate access to archaeological and indigenous knowledge about the past. By engendering dialogue about the past, over time local communities might come to view archaeological remains as valuable distinguishing features of the local landscape and of cultural identity, thereby enhancing heritage conservation.

Beginning in January 2007, MACHI established partnerships with local NGOs in four countries of the Maya region. Programs were developed that focused on the presentation of the pre-Columbian past, the promotion of indigenous cultural heritage (particularly maternal languages), and the importance of heritage conservation. The content and style of engagement varied from country to country, taking into account the capacity of local NGOs and the preferences of local indigenous groups. In both Honduras and Belize, consultation with leaders of local indigenous organizations (CONIMCHH in Honduras and the Julian Cho Society in Belize) resulted in a plan to launch a series of cultural heritage workshops in schools. Projects of visual and audio media—DVDs and community radio—were chosen for Yucatán and Quintana Roo in Mexico and for El Petén in Guatemala. Complementary materials linked to these education initiatives included four versions of a multilingual coloring book with text in Yukatek, Mopan, Q'eqchi', or Ch'orti' paired with either Spanish or English text. Slightly later, community heritage-mapping projects were initiated in Honduras and in highland Guatemala. Educational and entertainment materials were prepared in collaboration with local NGOs and community organizations. The translation of materials into indigenous languages provided a significant opportunity for critical feedback followed by revision to reflect community preferences. Annual review of the programs via questionnaires also provided an opportunity for critical feedback and program revision. In short,

program design was a continual process routinely informed by feedback from participants.

In the valley of Copán, MACHI collaborated with AACR in a program designed for children living in rural *aldeas* (small villages) around Copán Ruinas, the municipal seat. The execution of this program simultaneously with a language reacquisition program administered by CONIMCHH helped to reinforce the value of Ch'orti' culture and heritage in local communities. The success of the AACR-MACHI collaboration, however, was due in large part to the creative, dialogic method of teaching embraced by Carin Steen, a Dutch artist and director of AACR.

Creatively Expressing Identity and History

Founded in 1999 as Copán Pinta, AACR began by providing free art workshops for children and adults living in the municipal center of Copán Ruinas and in surrounding *aldeas*, thus filling the void of opportunities to engage in expressive culture. In time, Steen's methodology shifted such that the arts became the vehicle for teaching about social and environmental issues, such as the protection of the environment, children's rights, and preventive health care.

Besides the aesthetic benefits that result from artistic projects (such as murals in public places; see CA+ online supplement A), creating art is a process that can promote community unity, transmit messages and values, and inspire dialogue. Arts materialize the cultural values of a community as well as collective memory, thus affirming a community's cultural identity (Joosten 2006). An artistic methodology has been especially successful in rural communities, where schoolteachers often face a classroom of up to 60 students spanning grades one through six. Teachers are provided with minimal educational materials and are expected to apply an institutional pedagogy based on memorization and repetitive writing (see the general discussion of the poverty of this teaching methodology in Freire 2002 [1970]), neither of which stimulates curiosity, problem-solving skills, imagination, or initiative among students. In these underfunded rural schools, activities focused on expressive culture are particularly effective, as they do not require a specific level of education, expensive supplies, or special skills.

After initial engagement with *aldeas* that self-identify as Ch'orti', Steen found that her students had little knowledge of Maya culture or consciousness of the relationship between ancient Maya sites and contemporary Ch'orti' people. This opportunity for learning became the basis of the AACR-MACHI collaboration that emphasizes Maya cultures of the past and present and heritage conservation via a program simply titled the Maya Project.

The monthly workshops offered by the Maya Project introduce students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades to nine separate themes: Maya of Copán, plants and animals, maize, religion, rulers of Copán, Maya science, writing, archaeology,

and Maya peoples of today. Each theme incorporates information about ancient and modern Maya identities and the conservation of cultural heritage. Workshops take place monthly during regular class periods and are taught by three young adults from local communities—Moisés Mancía, Elsa Morales, and Londin Velásquez. Adding to the intriguing complexity of the endeavor is the fact that each workshop teacher self-identifies differently—Mancía as Ch'orti' and Morales as *mestiza* (of mixed heritage, although she was selected as an indigenous “model” to appear on the cover of a popular Copán tourist brochure). At the start of Velásquez's involvement with the Maya Project he identified as *ladino*, but today he self-identifies as Ch'orti'. After the completion of his first year as an instructor, Velásquez related that before the project “the ruins were nothing [to him]. The pride that I feel now, knowing the children of this town's communities and knowing their culture have made me realize that it is my culture too.” Incremental growth in program size and resources has increased the number of participating children from 310 (16 communities) in 2007 (for further information, see CA+ online supplement B, available as a PDF) to 347 students (18 communities) in 2008 and to 489 students (23 communities) in 2009 (fig. 2). Small and/or more distant communities that cannot feasibly be visited on a monthly basis are rotated through a special general workshop offered once a year. In 2009, workshops were provided for selected communities outside the Ch'orti' region, including La Cuenca el Canjegrál (near the coastal city of La Ceiba) and Tocontín.

The Maya Project employs a participatory methodology that includes physical *dinámicas* (exercises), creative expression, and performance. Artwork complements each workshop theme; for instance, if students are studying the dynastic sequence of nearby Copán, they might construct their own three-dimensional version of Altar Q (a cubelike carved monument on which 16 rulers [four on each side] are depicted with a long hieroglyphic text carved into the top of the large cube). Each year students from a handful of participating *aldeas* tour the archaeological park of Copán—a place that few children have ever visited, although they live less than 10 km from the park. Youths receive one of three versions of a workbook designed to challenge students in grades four, five, or six (fig. 3). Workbooks offer more information about the monthly themes along with basic assignments and games that encourage students to continue engaging with the material between workshops. Workbooks were designed (and revised) collaboratively by AACR and MACHI. Importantly, workshop teachers have considerable latitude in emphasizing (or not) didactic materials from the workbook depending on their interests and capacity as well as student receptivity. Students in rural Honduran schools generally do not receive textbooks, so the simple act of distributing an activity book about cultural heritage represents a significant change to business as usual, and for many children it is the first book that they have ever owned. Younger students in grade three receive a coloring book that depicts imagery of both ancient and con-



Figure 3. Cover of a sixth-grade activity book designed for students participating in workshops on cultural heritage (artwork by Carin Steen). A color version of this figure is available in the online edition of *Current Anthropology*.

temporary Maya culture accompanied by short bilingual texts in Ch'orti' and Spanish (fig. 4). In the program's second year, facilitators noted that children who participated in the workshops of the previous year remembered the content of the themes and began to mentor the incoming students. Although anecdotal, this development suggests the possibility that students are internalizing a new kind of knowledge about cultural heritage. An education study conducted in 28 different countries found a significant correlation between civic engagement and books in homes (Torney-Purta et al. 2001:146).

Experiencing Archaeological Field Research

The activity books focus on imparting knowledge about the local Copán archaeoscape to educate and engage the children participating in the workshops. Content was taken from a variety of sources, including academic literature on the archaeological site of Copán, local and regional oral histories, recent historical records, and the "typical" experience of local stakeholders. For example, each of the three workbooks contains a section on the archaeological research that has been so central to the development of Copán as a tourist venue and World Heritage site. Although most children were aware that archaeologists (a profession only vaguely understood)

often came to the ruins of Copán from foreign countries, they knew little of their activities and responsibilities. The archaeology chapter of each activity book presents a short summary of the archaeological history of Copán, details the methods of excavation, and identifies the different specialists involved in archaeological investigations. This theme, more than any other, called for hands-on practical experience. Through mini-investigations, children mapped small sections of a schoolyard and recorded their findings of surface artifacts.

The children's interest in archaeological fieldwork inspired workshop teachers to delve more deeply into the theme through practical experience (see CA+ online supplement C, available as a PDF). The community of La Pintada, located in the southeastern corner of the Copán Valley, was selected for a pilot archaeological project conducted under the supervision of Spanish archaeologist Argi Diez. The investigated site, named Casa Los Sapos by the students, contains the remains of a recently abandoned perishable dwelling located on the property of Hacienda San Lucas. Through 16 sessions, a dozen children from La Pintada (averaging 11 years of age) learned how to conduct research into the oral history of the abandoned house site, map the site and collect artifacts from the site surface, make sectional drawings, and archive artifacts (fig. 5). Although the project never reached the excavation stage, the children showed unflagging interest in the entire



E pak'ab'ob' ke' uchyob' ch'en tyai b'ajxan turob' emayob' xe' uk'ab'ob' epak'ab'ob'
taka meyra ub'ijnusyabob' b'ajxan ub'isyob' xe tarum xi' uchyob' inte' mapa te' lugar.
Uchyob' e ch'en taka meyra te' kuidado twa' ma 'chi ma'chachob' e patna'r ke' wa'r uchyob'.

*Las personas que excavan los sitios donde antes vivían los Mayas se
llaman arqueólogos. Primero miden el terreno y levantan un mapa del sitio.
Excavan con mucho cuidado para no dañar a los hallazgos.*

Figure 4. Page 13 of a bilingual (Ch'orti' and Spanish) coloring book in which young children are introduced to the activities and responsibilities of archaeologists (artwork by Carin Steen).

process of investigation. The site became “theirs” as they worked on it and cared for it.

After 3 months of cleaning, marking, drawing, and measuring, the project—along with a report—was presented to the community of La Pintada (fig. 6). The children structured the event, guiding the visitors through a selection of artifacts (a pair of lady's underwear without a doubt being the favorite) and speaking about their experiences during a slide show of photos that documented the investigation. The event ended with the distribution of diplomas to all participants as well as a copy of the official report of the investigation that the children took home. The students enjoyed the project so much that they returned to the site in 2009 to break ground in a shallow excavation intended to reveal more thoroughly the structure's foundation. The success of this project highlights the efficacy of education projects focused on the prac-

tical skills of archaeology as well as the linked quality of practiced experience and conservation. The transformation of Casa Los Sapos from a house site in ruins—abandoned literally and metaphorically—to a place of conservation activity and a focus of oral history is striking.

The increased value ascribed to Casa Los Sapos came from the iterative physical interaction of the children with the place via archaeological methods and the stories evoked by the material properties of place. Archaeological methods have a reliable capacity to generate curiosity because of the manner in which they isolate and highlight subject-object relationships. It is not such a great leap to imagine how such interactions could in the long run engender greater curiosity and concern for conservation of the many archaeological sites in the valley of Copán. Practically, the Casa Los Sapos investigation provided entry-level experience in archaeological fieldwork that



Figure 5. Children of La Pintada, Department of Copán, conducting an archaeological investigation of Casa Los Sapos (photo by Argi Diez; art-work by Carin Steen). A color version of this figure is available in the online edition of *Current Anthropology*.

has the potential to encourage indigenous children to seek further education in and engagement with the ever-growing archaeological tourism in their backyard. During 2011, MACHI collaborated with a local *colegio* (junior high school) in the community of San Andrés to develop an extracurricular certificate program for students in grades seven through nine. We are seeking approval of this certificate program from the Honduran Institute for Anthropology and History (IAAH) in the hopes that graduates will have a leg up in applying for technical jobs in archaeology in and around the site of Copán. We also hope to establish a link between the *colegio* program and the soon-to-be-established anthropology program at the National Autonomous University in Tegucigalpa (E. Martinez, personal communication, 2010).

Evaluating the Impact of the Maya Project

Education programs typically require a cycle of many years before impact can be measured. Nevertheless, surveys administered by AACR following the 2007 and 2008 seasons of the Maya Project suggest that this program has diminished the perceived distance between Ch'orti' children and their

ancestral heritage (see also CA+ online supplement D, available as a PDF). Responses to questionnaires by teachers in whose classrooms the monthly workshops take place are particularly noteworthy. Most schoolteachers in the Copán Valley hail from the Department of Copán, and, although few self-identify as Ch'orti', many have grown up in *campesino* (farming) families or similarly low economic situations. Some teachers live in the communities in which they teach during the week and return home over the weekend, and others commute daily from the town of Copán Ruinas. Of the 16 teachers surveyed in 2007, 88% felt that it was "very important" that the children of Copán receive classes about Maya culture, while the other 12% felt that this education was "important." In 2008, 16 of 19 teachers (84%) felt that the program was "very important," and the remainder (16%) agreed that it was "important." In both years, classroom teachers explained their responses in terms of the need to strengthen and revitalize Maya culture in the Department of Copán. Learning about Maya culture "is very important," stated one respondent in 2007. "It is a way of knowing about our culture and fomenting our moral values"² (which presumably were

2. All translations from Spanish by the authors.



Figure 6. Invitation to a presentation of results of the archaeological investigation of Casa Los Sapos (artwork by Carin Steen). A color version of this figure is available in the online edition of *Current Anthropology*.

more important in the past). In 2008, a teacher pointed out that education about Maya culture has a positive impact because “we are a community of Maya descendents, and it is necessary to rescue what we can so that we will know more.” Learning about Maya culture has a positive impact, claimed a third teacher in 2007, because it serves as a counterbalance to “the ladinoization of the [local] communities.”

Classroom teachers see the potential of this dynamic cul-

tural program to promote interest among a younger generation in an indigenous heritage that has long been stigmatized. Ch’orti’ children tend to be poorly informed about their indigenous heritage because most families abandoned overt cultural markers of Ch’orti’ identity years ago. Student survey responses in 2007 point to the stigma of indigenous identity: following the workshop, several students expressed new respect for Maya culture. This change in attitude suggests that

the program is engendering a new dialogue among children as they reexamine the link between Ch'orti' identity and their deep cultural heritage. For example, many indigenous Ch'orti' do not self-identify as Maya descendants. In 2008, this detachment was further clarified when students were asked to recall what they learned in the workshop. Whereas many students mentioned specific archaeological sites, a few commented that "we are also Mayas" or that "the Mayas continue to exist today." In the interests of full disclosure, teachers in the Maya Project discuss the ancestral connection between Ch'orti' and Classic Maya peoples. To a certain extent, this perspective of Maya survival might have semantic roots. The many ethnolinguistic groups that speak a language classified as Mayan by linguists tend to self-identify locally and linguistically, yet the term "Maya" is widely used by anthropologists to refer to Mayan-speaking peoples of both past and present (Parks 2009:62–64; Wilson 1995:21–22). Nonetheless, the distancing between contemporary Ch'orti' and their ancestors who constructed the Classic-period cities upon which a billion-dollar tourism industry has developed is a consequence of more than scholarly semantics.

To gauge local support for education about Maya cultural heritage, a limited number of surveys were administered to community members who were not directly associated with the workshops. In 2007, 100% ($n = 9$) of the survey respondents thought that education about Maya culture would have a positive impact on Ch'orti' communities. One individual stated a sentiment intoned by many: "We need to conserve our ancestral culture in the Ch'orti' communities." The questionnaire changed slightly in 2008 and posed the question of whether community members thought that the project contributed to the conservation of modern and ancient Maya culture. Once again, those surveyed responded overwhelmingly in the affirmative. As one individual claimed, "I believe that this project contributes to the conservation of Maya culture because, in truth, much has been lost with education and technological initiatives that do not include anything about Maya culture." Other individuals thought that learning about Maya culture would create dialogue about ancient places and modern practices and engender awareness among a younger generation of the important role that they can play in the conservation of an impressive cultural legacy in which they rightfully have a stake.

Instructors Mancía, Velásquez, and Morales commented on the long-term value of the program's content and methodology for participating children. By the end of 2008, both Mancía and Velásquez noted the enthusiasm of their students for the class. Now "they have a better understanding," commented Velásquez. "They feel proud to be part of their culture, to live their culture, because before they lived their culture but they didn't know its origins, which is a [major] part," Mancía agreed. "The classes and homework are a diversion [for the students]. . . . Their knowledge has already grown [significantly]."

Revisiting the Copán Archaeoscape

Ch'orti' claims to indigenous identity and to a share in proceeds from tourism at the World Heritage site of Copán highlight the many ways in which the past is present and a flash point for conflict. If recent epigraphic propositions regarding the Ch'olti' language (an ancestral version of Ch'orti') as the language of Classic Maya hieroglyphics continue to receive validation, then it is a cruel twist of fate that the power brokers of the past communicated in a language that has come precariously close to extinction. Equally tragic is the estrangement of contemporary Ch'orti' from a meaningful role in a lucrative heritage industry, another consequence of the historical process of heritage distancing (see also Ardren 2004). The twenty-first century postcolonial narrative of Honduran Ch'orti' people has been typified by a struggle to unsettle what Wainwright (2008) refers to as "colonial geographies of power" (41–59). This struggle is instantiated in the monumental architecture of Copán and the pronounced wealth disparities of the Copán archaeoscape. Confronting this reality, Honduran Ch'orti' identity has undergone a reconstruction that uses characteristics of the community's cultural and economic disenfranchisement to express indigeneity.

Recently, archaeologists have explored the intersection of human rights with cultural heritage or with rights to heritage (Orser 2007; Silverman and Ruggles 2007). Citing the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adapted in December 1948), Silverman and Ruggles (2007) discuss the highly politicized terrain of human rights, particularly in relation to indigenous peoples, intellectual property, national decisions regarding what is memorialized and what is forgotten, and determination of access to sacred sites. Free articulation of heritage is an important aspect of human rights. Nonetheless, minority communities within nation-states often find themselves in a precarious situation—seeking recognition and redress from the same political structure against which they struggle (Silverman and Ruggles 2007:17–18). In the United States—as well as Australia and New Zealand—some measure of recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples over their cultural heritage has been achieved through binding legislation at the national level. In the United States and elsewhere, archaeologists and cultural resource managers have moved to a practice of consultation and in some places to collaboration with indigenous partners (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008; Murray et al. 2009). Particularly in Australia, the practice of archaeology changed dramatically as indigenous communities began to play an active and determinative role in investigating and narrating the past (McNiven and Russell 2005; Murray 2009; Smith and Jackson 2008). Thus, an archaeoscape can be profoundly transformed by acknowledging the legitimate role of previously disenfranchised interest groups—particularly indigenous communities—in the interpretation and management of an archaeological past. As Sonya Atalay (2008) has shown, collaboration with descendent groups opens new ways of looking at the

past and of telling history from a number of perspectives. In the process of developing an approach that often is called community-based research (Schensul 2010), archaeological narratives are enriched and deepened. This direction can lead to a kind of engaged anthropology or public archaeology that is fully collaborative rather than simply a form of outreach (Low and Merry 2010; Merriman 2004). The workshops reported here are a step in that direction.

In Honduras, descendent communities enjoy no legislated rights over remains of the past and have limited access to Western archaeological knowledge of the past despite the fact that Copán has been the subject of archaeological inquiry for a century and a half. Liebmann (2008:4) notes that archaeology is historically entangled in the construction of colonial discourses—of value and inclusion. Even though the rhetoric of descendent rights (legal or otherwise) over cultural heritage might be too narrow (as discussed by Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:8), descendent communities do possess “more complex and compelling *interests* than other communities, including the archaeological community itself.” Certainly, a case can be made for the compelling interests of Ch’orti’ communities in the archaeological park of Copán, a source of national pride and identity and a proven generator of wealth. Ch’orti’ activists have proven adept at expressing their compelling interest in the discourse of indigeneity and cultural survival.

Perhaps the two most vulnerable constituents of the Copán archaeoscape are the physical remains of the past and the children of the present. As has been suggested in the preceding pages, the two are not unrelated. First and most important are the children of the Copán archaeoscape, those who have been reared in small *aldeas* that surround the tourist town of Copán Ruinas and do not receive the benefit of high-quality education. This same group of underserved children responded energetically to an education project that is interactive, grounded in creativity and experiential learning, and focused on cultural heritage. While we acknowledge that pre-Columbian Maya heritage is an archaeological construct rooted largely in a Western knowledge tradition, that reality does not provide a rationale for excluding access to this information and discouraging active participation in the creation of archaeological knowledge on the part of indigenous children (see Pyburn 1999 for an expanded discussion). The key to the success of this program, moreover, is not its content (important though it is) but the philosophy of education embraced by the Maya Project workshop teachers. Noted Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1998) wrote that “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (30). Thus, the opportunity for students to produce their own version of a royal headdress or to construct their name in hieroglyphs creates new possibilities as well as novel and emergent learning opportunities. The type of learning that encourages reflexivity is particularly relevant to archaeology (see Hamilakis 2004), a discipline that tacks between evidence and interpretation.

The long-term impact of education programs can be difficult to measure. For the Maya Project, the direct impact of the workshops has been lengthened by the distribution of activity books and the creation of art projects that provide each student and his or her family with a reminder of the content of the workshops. But what of the impact of the project on the other vulnerable part of the Copán archaeoscape—on the tangibles as well as intangibles of Maya cultural heritage? Will the preservation of ancient houses and temples—and of indigenous languages—be enhanced through the workshops? Do children of the Copán archaeoscape experience a newfound sense of stewardship over remains of the past? Certainly, the students of La Pintada gained a sense of stewardship over Casa Los Sapos—the recently abandoned Ch’orti’ house that was the subject of their archaeological investigation. Focused inquiry and curiosity do promote stewardship, as archaeologists can readily attest. Despite the critique of the Society for American Archaeology Code of Ethics as being too object oriented (Groarke and Warrick 2006), the relationship between people and objects is compelling and, as Latour (2005) and others have argued, bidirectional in the sense that meaningful interaction with objects changes people. In this sense, challenges to the conservation of archaeological remains that exist in the present are inherently social. Interacting with archaeological objects and structural remains is a powerful way of learning not just about the past but also about one’s identity in the present. In this manner, interpreting the remains of the past not only can result in enhanced value being accorded to archaeological sites but also can provide benefit to contemporary communities.

Concluding Thoughts about an Indigenous Ch’orti’ Archaeology

Archaeoscapes encode tension, stress, and dialectic as the interests of multiple communities collide at the intersection of the past with the present. We suggest that archaeoscapes are best conceived with an open architecture that engenders discussion and dialogue among diverse constituents, particularly those with compelling interests, such as indigenous archaeologists (Nicholas 2011). Toward this end, the Maya Project, a collaboration between two nonprofit organizations, has impacted the Copán archaeoscape by providing access to knowledge and the process of knowledge construction for Ch’orti’ as well as *ladino* children. The late African American historian John Hope Franklin is said to have remarked that explaining history from a variety of angles makes it not only more interesting but also more true. The long-term goal of the initiative discussed here is to engender greater participation of Ch’orti’ youths in the practice, substance, and theory of Maya archaeology. Ultimately, by broadening collaboration and expanding the diversity of interpretive perspectives, constructed narratives about the past of this iconic pre-Columbian civilization will likewise be broadened and enriched. One conceivable metric for the impact of this initiative might be the

future publication of an account of the scribes, warriors, and kings of Copán written by a Ch'orti' archaeologist.

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Comments

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The question of authority—rooted in multiple factors—is identified throughout this article. It is a question of authority that is no different from that of most cultures and archaeological sites that are impacted worldwide. In most cultures, it is the state that retains the authority for its protection, but, as seen in the article, not all states seek to protect all sites, nor do they expect restoration to impact or attract more tourism to the site. Consequently, archaeological research is affected by these limitations, such that the archaeologist will question the ethics as to who holds the authority to determine where and what to protect rather than restore. The article highlights the importance of defining and upholding archaeological standards in a professional and methodical way.

Conservation cannot be sustained solely by the franchise that indigenous peoples may have in profiting from development of their cultural patrimony or in the ongoing discussion over the conservation of sites and the quality of human life. This goes beyond archaeology itself—it is not the discipline that calls for restoration of archaeological areas, but it is the historical record that will suffer the consequences of

looting, urbanization, and agricultural activities. Similar to the situation so prevalent in Mexico, the problem lies in the absence of professionalism, ethics, and methodology.

Rooted in American idealism, this document is not motivated by indigenous ideologies, but it is a very practical application based on the researchers' observations and inspections as well as the implicit common sense of the MACHI project.

The researchers' astute observations point to problems that pertain to both non-Mayans and contemporary Mayans alike, claiming that, in seeking to generate revenues, their actions are those of a nation-state. On the other hand, also concerned with producing revenues, it is the state that is responsible for the research that is conducted on the site, and it is implementing a late-coming capitalism in its own way, building a value for patrimony and indigeneity.

The authors report that insiders face, recognize, and observe a set of distortions from their particular perspective. The distortions themselves confront and represent all that is implied in the aforementioned late-coming capitalism; that is to say, in terms of the theory of economic dependency, when development reaches the outlying satellite areas despite their vulnerability, we fall into the situation that we now observe. However, it is not a question of bad capitalism or unjust capitalism, but rather a system where capitalism performs only a single function and is only one slice of the pie that is consumed by those who practice it.

As consumers, contemporary indigenous peoples are no different than consumers from any other Western culture. On the contrary, I am inclined to observe that, on the positive side, the general work of MACHI in the region serves as an invitation for them to produce genuine, contemporary products and indigenous traditions that build a sense of national identity while contributing to the local economy and enhancing the quality of life.

The work of these specialists is not sufficient for the Maya to restore their structures exactly as they were. As the Ch'orti' have become modernized with the support of MACHI, they simultaneously promote the conservation and consolidation of said structures, such that the authenticity gives new value to that which is Mayan or produced by the Maya.

The report shows how the forces of alienation distance the Ch'orti' from their pre-Hispanic cultural heritage and contribute to the formation of a national identity, although it is apparent that the nation does not value what the contemporary indigenous people value. Compared with my experiences in Mexico, as the indigenous people become colonized, they are changed into productive people who become valued by the system and by the economic theory of dependence. For example, the adoption of the Spanish language, coupled with the formation of national identity, values the past at the expense of the colonizing Spaniards who were responsible for the change. That is to say, the adoption of a language provides access to a system, and it eventually reaches even the most distanced individuals in the outlying areas; similarly, the in-

come that is generated by tourism in Copán, as in Mexico, will eventually benefit even the most remote and disadvantaged people.

We find ourselves at a perfect time to adapt and adopt a definition of an archaeological concept not from an indigenous perspective or one that may have emerged from the most distant regions but from a concept of common sense. This would represent space where the physical and ideological past intersects with the present and is maintained in continuous change upon which a new national identity will be constructed. The policies under debate in Mexico are about who has access to and who uses the cultural patrimony. In the case of Copán, various stakeholders are in contention: archaeologists representing state or civic organizations, indigenous people, local residents, and tourists. This prompts us to pose the following questions: To what extent does the archaeologist maintain the interests of the state or the interests of the indigenous peoples? More importantly, to what extent do we want to focus on the adoption of archaeological ethics to form an identity that is always in flux? Who accepts this? A great deal of work remains to be done, not only in Copán but in archaeology itself.

Another situation that has been observed is the heritage distancing that is evident in Copán, coupled with a political parallelism with Mexico. Despite the recognition of indigenous peoples by the Mexican congress in 2001 (signing the amendment of Article 4 under Fox's presidency) as well as the 1989 signature of Treaty 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries) and its ratification by the senate in 1991, there remains much to be done. These treaties make us reflect on the geographic divisions of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, which have created ethnic and linguistic groups, and, as has been the case for Mexico and Honduras, the differentiation of 32 states has resulted in more than 60 linguistic groups (derived from a dozen language families), resulting in a division rather than a unification of a nation.

Inasmuch as Copán has become the symbol of longevity and of the strengths and failures of the Ch'orti' in Honduras, the authors highlight the resilience and determination of the Ch'orti' struggle for cultural survival. Revealing the failure of ILO Convention 169 and the absence of sanctions, Copán also shows the existence of a deep past that is primarily built on Western logic—based on the interests of those holding power—inasmuch as it makes the past culture inaccessible to the indigenous communities. This prompts me to pick up where the authors left off: access to the academic values and media that are both governed and constructed by archaeological knowledge provides the material for serious debate, which can lead to the strengthening and empowerment of the Ch'orti'. I would like to add that this power cannot be delegated, but it must be taken, and it cannot be extended to others until there is some level of organization among the indigenous groups. The MACHI methodology is fascinating

and can be used as a model to be applied to other Maya regions in an attempt to organize indigenous groups.

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MACHI is the first archaeology-oriented program to attempt such novel, diverse, and multiscalar educational work in the Maya area. The archaeology of Copán approaches 2 centuries of celebrated research, yet public outreach by archaeologists there has been woefully lacking, especially with regard to education. We should therefore recognize MACHI's efforts in Honduras as daring and groundbreaking. It will be fascinating to see how the program evolves over the next decade and what impact it will have on indigenous Maya communities, foreign and national archaeologists, the conservation of cultural patrimony, and discussions of ethics in archaeology.

Two aspects of the MACHI program beg immediate attention and constructive criticism. The first regards how to measure the success and achievements of the Copán project. McAnany and Parks discuss this at length and acknowledge the need to develop better techniques and metrics. Their method of polling teachers (and/or community members) is probably not appropriate, at least not without considerably more information and surveying. For example, it is not clear who these teachers are and whether or to what extent they have their own interests at stake (biasing responses), nor is it apparent to what degree they comprehend the project's methodologies, goals, and assumptions. The development of appropriate assessment concepts and technologies has become a mandate in U.S. higher education and has produced sophisticated methodologies that MACHI is strongly advised to exploit for its purposes, especially tools that (a) build on constant dialogue and reflection and (b) use quantitative measurements that are open to ongoing readaptation to circumstances. The measures currently in use are a logical starting point, but measuring the results and success of MACHI's efforts require constant development in response to critical self-evaluation.

The second issue regards appropriate theory for the MACHI program and its various projects. The authors address this in part, for example, with the "archaeoscape" concept created by Parks. This is a clever device for classifying the social and physical context of the Copán municipality. However, this concept does not acknowledge that the Copán socioscape consists of industries and "realities" that are not necessarily tied to or dependent on ruins or archaeological tourism, such as large- and small-scale agriculture, international overland shipping and passenger transportation, and trafficking in black-market commodities, including narcotics.

Crafted specifically for MACHI's purposes, the archaeoscape is a construction that may be unduly objectifying, self-limiting, and productive of another kind of distancing that the program would prefer to avoid.

Related to this, there is an inescapable contradiction in a project that imparts to children the skills to reconstruct an isolatable and object-oriented past—a “real” past—while maintaining as a central operational principle that the past is as negotiable, open to interpretation, and presently situated as the politics of Honduran Ch'orti' identity. The program risks infusing an ideally liberating social mission with positivist ideologies that can work to constrain multivocality and the empowerment of Ch'orti' communities and organizations. The archaeoscape concept, as a constructed and imposed category framing an object of study (e.g., the Copán alluvial pocket), expresses this contradiction as well. Celebrating and teaching archaeological methods, precepts, and concepts that segment the past and its industries as objects can hamper MACHI's larger goals and subvert the useful aspects of the archaeoscape concept. Weak quantitative measures of program dynamics and success within the archaeoscape further highlight where the program risks failure by not addressing the fuller array of potentially distancing methods and realities.

To continue to build MACHI in a way that ensures the narrowing of several types of distancing—between people and their heritage, between fixed and negotiable notions of heritage, between subject and object, between objects and their meaning in the present, and between program results and their significance—the project should integrate a professional ethnographer who is able to use flexible and innovative experimental methods and methodologies that work to draw out the multiple human dimensions this program engages. In effect, MACHI would benefit by consciously transforming the program from educational outreach to explicit research project. The task of measuring and evaluation, for example, might involve a process of turning a multifaceted mirror on all involved parties to assess their needs, assumptions, resistances, and impositions in a way that aids a better understanding of the archaeological knowledge industry we encourage others to adopt and negotiate.

Quetzil Castañeda (e.g., 1996, 2008) has pioneered ethnography as a means of evaluating the role and uses of archaeology and has also demonstrated how and why this is a legitimate anthropological research orientation. Castañeda's (2009) use of experimental ethnographic installations and stagings, for example, could be a highly relevant precedent for MACHI's future efforts at assessment and at attaining greater theoretical relevance in the larger scheme of engaged and decolonized anthropological research. The integral use of an ethnographic component will make MACHI considerably more groundbreaking than it already is and can guide young Maya people toward cultural anthropology as well as archaeology. The incorporation of ethnography and ethnographic methodologies (conventional and experimental) will have a

fundamental impact on MACHI projects, ideally framed as self-reflexive anthropological research.

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McAnany and Parks have stimulated a necessary discussion about Ch'orti' communities in western Honduras and the different factors that contribute to their heritage distancing. From my perspective as an active stakeholder regarding conservation and management of the archaeological park of Copán, a World Heritage site, as well as the numerous archaeological sites in the Copán Valley, this article tackles two critical aspects of sustainable heritage conservation: the involvement of local communities in the heritage-management process and the need to improve communication among interest groups of the Copán archaeoscape.

Tensions among interest groups in Copán have their roots in the late nineteenth century, when the Honduran central government declared the core of the ancient city a protected “area of antiquities.” The tutelage of the state over the archaeological site of Copán has been, on the one hand, a useful measure to protect the site's integrity; on the other hand, the complete control of archaeological resources has contributed to the notion that heritage conservation, inside and outside park boundaries, is the responsibility of the state and the state only. Tensions have gradually escalated in the last 30 years because of the development of infrastructure related to the establishment of a national archaeological park. On one level, then, some of the current frictions among interest groups arose when economic profits derived from tourism became tangible, creating conflicting national and local perspectives about the archaeological park's administration and economic distribution. Moreover, the Honduran government declared a large area comprising the whole Copán Valley a national monument, which imposed land-use restrictions throughout the region, particularly around the archaeological park of Copán. Conflict among landowners and the central government (represented by the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History), caused by regulations concerning agricultural and infrastructural projects, is a permanent issue regarding management of cultural resources in the region. World Heritage status adds another dimension to the complexity of factors that accompany the management and conservation of the archaeological site of Copán.

The core of the ancient city of Copán, as with any other heritage place, is valued by each interest group according to a particular set of reasons and motivations. Moreover, the past is socially constructed and valued by each one of these groups. In this sense, the authors point out the interaction among a variety of stakeholders in the social landscape of the

Copán Valley and how different values (scientific, economic, political, and religious, among others) are created and re-created by these interest groups to engage in and benefit from the management of the renowned Maya site. Conversely, archaeological sites located on the margins of the ancient (and modern) city of Copán are “devalued” and often seen as obstacles to local development or are simply destroyed by looting and urban growth. In fact, destruction of archaeological sites outside the protected area of the national park is one of the most sensitive conservation issues in the Copán Valley.

McAnany and Parks present the results of an education program that combines heritage education and site conservation. Oral accounts, mapping, collection techniques, and analysis of artifacts were combined to develop an integrated interpretation of the archaeology of an abandoned house at the community of La Pintada. Archaeologist Argi Diez (2011) applied a truly community-based approach in conducting the project named Casa Los Sapos. From the IHAH’s perspective, this initiative constitutes a pilot project that could be replicated in other parts of the country, given that it has concrete conservation outcomes in terms of developing a more holistic understanding of the contemporary values of archaeological research and settlements as well as the cultural significance of places. I look forward to continue working with MACHI to develop a certificate archaeology program for *Copaneco* students.

Stakeholders should share a common vision—that is, a coherent value system that reflects the cultural meanings of the heritage place. Furthermore, conservation of the archaeological remains and their significance must be the backbone of this value system. Learning about the importance of conservation and exploring the sources and consequences of heritage distancing will improve communication among interest groups in Copán. The education program developed collaboratively between MACHI and AACR focuses precisely on the valorization of cultural expression and archaeological heritage providing the means to strengthen a real sense of heritage closeness. Albeit in different manner, heritage distancing affects both Ch’orti’ and *ladino* communities, so the participation of *ladino* children in this kind of program is also important.

I believe that sustainable conservation can be achieved only when placed within a framework of shared decision making among stakeholders. Educating Ch’orti and *ladino* youths of Copán will certainly contribute to achieving such a goal.

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I congratulate McAnany, Parks, and their collaborator, Steen, for assisting the poor *campesinos* (subsistence farmers) of

Copán Ruinas in this innovative way. As they insinuate, creating a project that combines site conservation with fomentation of local indigenous pride is low-hanging fruit, and I am not surprised that they achieved immediate results with regard to the latter. One wonders why no one took the initiative before, but upon further reflection, on the basis of my experience in the region (including with and about archeologists) and a critical reading of their own article, several plausible answers come to mind.

The first has to do with the inherent tension of indigeneity. The authors acknowledge that the ruins of Copán had little value to the local *campesino* population beyond subsistence farming until Western archeological research and reconstruction created it. From an archeological perspective, indigenous activists might decry that their ancestors built the sites and thus they should have dominion, but it was Western archeologists and funding that turned them from a curious pile of rocks into resources for academic and tourism industries. Some archeologists (usually privately, to thwart accusations of colonialism) also challenge the assertion that contemporary residents in and around sites are necessarily the descendants of the original inhabitants. It is widely accepted that the ruling elites of Copán in the Classic period were Mayan and many linguists indeed believe that Ch’orti’ is the most promising language for deciphering its hieroglyphs, but the more one digs into historical documents and ethnohistory, the more one finds migrations over the centuries that make it difficult to pinpoint the extent to which the contemporary residents are descendant. Thus, the claim of indigenous activists that archeologists, who put ancient sites on the contemporary intellectual and economic map, have stolen their heritage is one-sided and dangerous to archeologists. If they do recognize the residents’ indigenous descent, they may feel that they are no longer legitimate claimants to the heritage because they have been too contaminated by nonindigenous culture. This charge of “not culturally pure enough” to qualify as indigenous, as I have written in other venues, is unfair because it ignores cultural transformations compelled by colonialism, of which Ch’orti’s have suffered several episodes.

The authors rightfully explain that indigeneity is based on both (a) descent from original colonized populations and (b) contemporary marginality from modern knowledge and power. While they touch lightly on the issue of descent—strategically perhaps, given the issues raised above—for the purposes of their project they focus on *campesino* marginality from knowledge about their region’s past. Their marginality in general is largely due to the willful neglect of the Honduran state and international development and investment, but it is also due in part to their sense that their subsistence lifestyle is morally right. In this sense, the authors’ project, by decreasing marginality and isolation, is helping to convert excluded and discriminated “Indians” into modern Hondurans—or, more accurately given the ethnic component of their project, into proud neoindigenous modern Hondurans. This is laudable given the miserable state of the *campesinos*, al-

though some archeological purists, already feeling threatened by CONIMCHH's disruptive claims to the ruins and its proceeds, may disagree.

Ultimately, the game for archeologists is about augmenting their funding and precarious control over sites so they can make their discoveries. Threats come from all directions—governments, indigenous activists, ethical research panels, academic critics, looters, unknowing destroyers of artifacts and features—and *campesinos* in the Ch'orti' area have largely fallen in the last category. They certainly care little about obsidian pieces and much less about provenience. With Western knowledge about the Western/modern value of the ancient remains of people who were perhaps their ancestors, the residents may become the sites' best preservers—or not. Impoverished and marginal people that they are, they may parlay their new knowledge to loot and sell artifacts, as some enlightened Ch'orti's have done in Guatemala. Or the new amateur archeologists may decide to carry out their own excavations without the proper training, destroying evidence and usurping professional archeologists' resources. Such incidents have happened in Guatemala.

The risks for archeologists in enlightening and empowering local populations with archeological knowledge are real, but in my opinion they are risks that should be taken for both ethical and preservation reasons. The destitute *campesinos* on whose land the sites lay must be brought into the process to the fullest extent possible. It is best for all concerned, including cultural anthropologists like myself, to put aside some time to get on bandwagons like those of McAnany and Parks and give the local residents—whether one believes that they are indigenous descendants or not—a respectable piece of the action and the benefit of the doubt that they will not kill the archeological goose laying the golden eggs.

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McAnany and Parks offer a preliminary evaluation of the MACHI-sponsored Maya Project, an education initiative aimed at schoolchildren in the Copán Valley of western Honduras who are ostensibly "distanced" from both the famous and the more modest archaeological heritage in their midst. At its heart, the project is an experiment in fostering archaeological stewardship among residents who do not (yet) envision elements of their landscape as archaeologically significant, let alone embrace such remains as part of "their" heritage. As the authors describe it, the project is replete with good intentions and is bolstered by references to contemporary ethical currents in the academy: engaged anthropology, heritage rights, democratizing knowledge, collaboration, and indigenous empowerment. In many respects, I am sympa-

thetic to their aims and efforts. However, I am also somewhat sceptical about a number of their premises and claims.

The pedagogical intervention they have set in motion is positioned against a backdrop of and as a remedy to what they call "heritage distancing." McAnany and Parks introduce this terminology to gloss "the alienation of contemporary inhabitants of a landscape from the tangible remains or intangible practices of the past." This conceptualization relies on a narrative of historical cultural rupture that is not in dispute, but it also makes a presumption about what "should" be heritage for contemporary Ch'orti' rather than making this question a point of departure. By positing a "distance" between Ch'orti' and a preset heritage frame, the authors situate the economic and social marginalization of contemporary Honduran Ch'orti' communities within the scope of archaeological interests or, perhaps more accurately, archaeological activism.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with such a move, I find it curious that McAnany and Parks begin from an assumption of heritage ("distanced") rather than an investigation of what or how heritage might be locally and variably conceived. The unstated premise here is that archaeological remains are necessarily "heritage." Indeed, material traces of past activity are constructed as "archaeological heritage" (cultural, national, scientific) from the perspective of resource managers and many academics. But the MACHI project was initiated precisely because many members of the communities they seek to "empower" do not conceive of these remains as heritage, archaeological or otherwise. Thus, the project appears to be unapologetically didactic and productive of heritage—or at least an archaeologically inflected heritage sensibility—among Ch'orti' schoolchildren.

From this angle, the project loses some of the radical potential that McAnany and Parks espouse. The core teaching efforts focus on archaeological methods and content, guided by the philosophy that "access by indigenous peoples to the means by which archaeological knowledge is constructed provides tools for critical inquiry and empowerment." The laudable goal here is opening up the process of knowledge production to a broader base of participants. However, most elements of the program as described appear to replicate the narrow authority of the archaeological voice already so dominant in the Copán archaeology industry (Mortensen 2009b). This leads me to ask, whose interest does such instruction really serve?

The initiative is perhaps better read and assessed against the specter of archaeological site destruction with which the authors are more centrally concerned. Combating looting and other activities (or attitudes) that result in the destruction of archaeological resources is a long-standing aim of the archaeological community and comprises the core of archaeological outreach programs worldwide. It has generational precedents right there in the Copán Valley, where the IHAH initiated campaigns among local residents nearly 3 decades ago, accompanying the passage of the country's first law of

national patrimony, in an effort to transform local residents into appropriate archaeological stewards. The current project also takes place with the support and encouragement of the contemporary governmental administration (although curiously the voice of the state, which oversees both education and archaeological resource management in Honduras, is notably absent in the paper). But in what ways does archaeological site conservation really benefit the Ch'orti? McAnany and Parks attempt to make their case here, but difficult questions linger. Would an appreciation for what one could learn from archaeological investigation really trump the opportunity to work and build on land that has been won as the result of decades-long and sometimes bloody battles (e.g., Loker 2009; Martínez Perdomo 1997)?

In their final proposition, meant as a metric of hope and “impact,” McAnany and Parks conjure a future Ch'orti' archaeologist authoring the next tome on the “scribes, warriors, and kings” of Copán. A central promise of incorporating indigenous perspectives in archaeology is the possibility of generating alternatives to the entrenched narratives propagated by traditional Western scholarship (Atalay 2008; Nicholas 2010). Perhaps we can hope instead that some among the archaeologically empowered Ch'orti' find an entirely different story to write, or even a different mode of heritage through which to find meaningful connections in contemporary landscapes.

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McAnany and Parks's much-needed collaborative education initiative was developed to counter the effects of so-called heritage distancing and to promote archaeological conservation in the greater Copán area. Appropriately, they situate their initiative at the intersection of identity, community values, and heritage management—a nexus constituting an archaeoscape. The challenge here is that a substantial power differential exists between the Ch'orti' communities, the Honduran nation, the archaeological and cultural tourism professions, and a World Heritage site. At Copán today, local needs and values are eclipsed by national and international interests that promote a particular vision (or version) of Copán that not only excludes the potential contributions of the Ch'orti' but also dismisses their presence as Maya descendants. Indeed, to loosely paraphrase Jacquetta Hawkes, not every stakeholder gets the Copán they deserve.

Over the past 2 decades (at least), increasing recognition of the interests and concerns of indigenous peoples regarding their heritage has contributed to their greater participation in and, in some cases, control of the archaeological process, particularly in Canada, the United States, and Australia (e.g.,

Nicholas 2008; Smith and Wobst 2005). In Central America and South America, the particular trajectories of colonialism have resulted in a different set of issues and responses (e.g., Morales and Camarena 2002; Silverman and Isbell 2008). McAnany and Parks's accounting of Ch'orti' identity and the nature of the Copán archaeoscape is thus essential to understanding heritage concerns in that region, including the activities of local activists to achieve greater access to, benefits from, and protection of their heritage through political means. MACHI complements these efforts through classroom activities for Ch'orti' youth designed to increase access to and appreciation of local archaeology and history. Essentially, this is the reverse of the notorious residential school model in North America and elsewhere that proved so successful in separating children in their formative years from their language and culture. In this case, however, MACHI's goal is to reinvest children (and teachers) with Ch'orti' culture through workshops and workbooks that emphasize history, language, and art, along with hands-on projects and class visits to Copán (although in apparently limited numbers in both cases).

The MACHI classroom program appears to be both sound and satisfying, on the basis of the steady increases in class size numbers, positive survey results, and anecdotal information reported for 2007–2009. McAnany and Parks have clearly accomplished much here and are to be commended. But what happens next? It is unclear what the long-term plans for this program are, especially as no workshops after 2009 are mentioned. Is the basic program continuing? And at what point might it become sustainable without outside help and funding? The great challenge to successful collaborations is keeping them going. I suspect that, even with local capacity achieved, it will be difficult for teachers to maintain the program without continued external funding. Furthermore, monthly workshops directed at primary school students clearly interest them in archaeology, language, and history, but developing that into something longer-lasting is another thing. McAnany and Parks recognize this need by noting that their 2011 pilot project with a junior high school (*colegio*) offers a certificate program, which they hope will receive recognition from the IHAH. But will even that be enough to aid young students to later obtain archaeology and cultural tourism jobs at Copán or elsewhere? As Antonio Cuxil, a Kachikel Mayan in Guatemala, writes, “It is going to take some time until we Mayas can make contributions to our history through archaeology because we have been disadvantaged academically for many years. We still don't have much experience participating in excavation projects or in supervisory positions” (Cuxil 2010:95).

I am especially curious about the responses of non-Ch'orti' stakeholders to MACHI, given the apparent tensions that exist at Copán. Are state representatives and professional archaeologists supportive of this program? There certainly is great opportunity at Copán for working together and capacity building (as evidenced elsewhere), as well as for integration of Ch'orti' interpretations and values at this internationally

renowned site—something that could benefit everyone while also lessening the harms of heritage distancing and increasing the flow of benefits to local communities. To this end, McAnany and Parks mention the value of collaboration and consultation in archaeological practice and heritage management. However, true collaboration and meaningful consultation are achieved only rarely, especially when one defines collaboration as power sharing or a full and equal partnership, something I do not see happening any time soon at Copán.

Finally, the authors have situated their project within the dialectic between past and present (to put it simply) and between objects and people, but the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage needs to be acknowledged more fully. While the Copán archaeoscape is dominated by material remains and how people relate to them, objects and places have no meaning without the intangible values attributed to them, whether through Ch'orti' worldview and traditional knowledge or scientific and historic means. Recognizing this could strengthen connections between the archaeological record and the living people.

MACHI has already made important contributions, especially as an education initiative. I hope that it is sustainable and can also be expanded to build capacity for archaeological and cultural tourism opportunities for community members.

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McAnany and Parks have created a program to save archaeological sites based on their expertise as archaeologists and personal commitment to the inherent value of preservation. They believe that knowledge of archaeologists' vision of a Maya past can be used to boost the confidence of very poor and disenfranchised Maya speakers. The idea is that if Maya people perceive archaeological ruins as "heritage," they will feel empowered by the achievements of people archaeologists identify as their ancestors and become enthusiastic about site preservation.

While I applaud efforts to involve Maya people in the disposition of their cultural property, I would like to see the authors address more of the underlying complexities of their mission. The needs of poor people, the priority of preservation as defined by archaeologists, the relevance and neutrality of archaeologists' version of Maya history, and the potential for social change to come from promoting a vision of the past centered on elite culture (often characterized as despotic and violent) all require serious consideration (Pyburn 1998, 2009).

Interesting discussions of these issues are available. Chapin and Threlkeld (2001) show that mapping itself does not empower Honduran communities—people have to own the maps and methodology, and even that can facilitate expro-

priation of their land and resources. There is also a wealth of literature problematizing archaeologists' attempts at educational outreach (Bezerra 2003; Ebbitt McGill 2011), on why the promotion of ethnicity by outsiders may not be benign (Hervik and Kahn 2006), and on how to discover the heritage deployed by living people who are oppressed and living in privation (Frühsohrge 2007). History has happened, and hieroglyphs and corbelled vaults are not relevant to all Maya identities; but people who speak Ch'orti' or Kekchi or Mopan have a triumphant and painful heritage that is important to them, if not that envisioned by archaeologists (Cohodas 2005; Warren 1978). Archaeological data are neither heritage nor identity; they can tell many stories about the past. It is up to Maya peoples to decide whether and how archaeological sites and archaeologists' stories are relevant to the education of their children. But it takes a long time to explain possibilities to people who have known few, and even longer for them to identify which aspects of the past constitute their heritage.

Contemporary applied anthropology suggests that for sustainable results to be achieved community engagement must be developed on their terms, not just from the outsiders' perspective (Larrison 2002). Having local consent is not the same as having the kind of shared ownership that leads to projects that succeed in the long term (Atalay 2010). As anthropologists, archaeologists can be reflexive about possible fallout from their efforts, and knowledge of the literature on applied anthropology is useful (Pyburn and Wilk 1995). A grassroots project requires equality in project planning not between outsiders and local NGOs or governing bodies or paid employees but with ordinary people with differing opinions, which is why factionalism is a normal aspect of all such efforts, making them complicated and even dangerous. The outsider can promote collaboration, but it is difficult to instantiate a sustainable program if helping people is epiphenomenal to another mission, such as preservation.

The information available on MACHI leaves many questions unanswered. For example, what is the MACHI policy on NGOs? AACR, although originated and run by Dutch artist Carin Steen and staffed by volunteers mostly from the Netherlands and Canada (<http://www.arteaccionhonduras.org/>), was apparently selected because it was a local NGO. But NGOs are just as capable of trampling local interests as any kind of development organization, and anthropologists have critiqued NGOs because they are not responsible to anyone (Lewis and Wallace 2000; Shah 2005).

Similarly, how are issues of authority and control addressed in the selection of staff and negotiations with bureaucracies? MACHI outreach instructors were chosen because they are community members, but neither speaks Ch'orti'. How are the intricacies of defining "communities" addressed (Henderson 2006; Matsuda 2004; Pyburn 2011; Smith 1990; Watanabe 1990)? MACHI's relationships with the national governments where it functions are not discussed, sources of funding are not revealed, human subjects' consent (for vulnerable populations, such as the children of the victims of

genocide) is not mentioned, how the pedagogy of Freire is actualized in the lesson plans is not demonstrated. Since McAnany and Parks control MACHI resources, there is no way to evaluate how this power differential is influencing the participants (if participants had the courage to respond negatively to the questionnaire, they would not need MACHI empowerment).

I do not pose these queries because I think the compassionate authors have nefarious intent or have covered up bad practice with their positive accounts but because I am a specialist and these issues of analysis and methodology are central to my professional life. I suspect that Maya speakers in several countries will benefit from the efforts of McAnany and Parks and that many of the questions I have about their approach can be answered. But this presentation portrays the authors more as missionaries than as anthropologists.

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This essay's arguments come at a crucial time for understanding recent processes of ethnic identity formation for the region of Copán following the emergence—since the 1990s—of the “Ch’orti’-Maya Movement” (Metz 2010). The effects of political activism and mobilization in reshaping Copán’s ethno-political landscape have, undoubtedly, transcended the expectations of both foreign activists and indigenous leaders. An indigenous movement that initially revolved around land recovery (Chenier, Sherwood, and Robertson 1999) has gradually transitioned to being equally concerned with issues of cultural revitalization and ethnic identity formation (Mortensen 2005). In this essay, the authors open up what will hopefully become fruitful lines of analyses for this region and topic. The authors wed a reflexive anthropological approach to the multidisciplinary analysis that some scholars have pioneered in the Ch’orti’-Maya area (Metz, McNeil, and Hull 2009). Their analytical context, which departs from what Parks (2010) has referred to as an “archaeoscape,” is also timely for understanding how notions of the past, once exclusively discussed in anthropological circles, have now permeated people’s notions of identity.

Of particular interest is the authors’ perspective of the long-term goals associated with the collaborative project that they examine. While I think indoctrinating Ch’orti’-Maya children in the “practice, substance, and theory of Maya archaeology” is a noble effort and certainly an effective tool for strengthening people’s sense of cultural belonging and identity, I am dubious about the extent to which it can be sustainably incorporated into the Honduran education system. AACR has done a remarkable job in incorporating some of these elements into their own initiatives, and it would be ideal if similar models can be devised for rural public schools. The

authors have already taken an important first step by negotiating the possibility of an archaeology certificate from the National Autonomous University of Honduras, and it is imperative to ensure that (1) the children involved in the initiative have adequate long-term educational training and (2) new spaces are created where a wider range of participants (in terms of age) can be involved. For instance, indigenous people have been working as aides to archeologists since the first archeological expeditions in the 1890s; therefore, people already working in archaeological projects can benefit from more systematic training.

Another crucial point raised by the authors is the issue of heritage distancing. While the authors are correct in pointing out that this is a salient issue in the Honduran public school curriculum, the problem is less about how the school curriculum “undervalues the precolonial past” and more about how up until the 1990s notions of ethnicity in Copán were still blurry and not openly embraced. Differentiation has always been more tied to class and place rather than ethnic divisions. The derogatory term *indio* (Indian), for instance, has always been used interchangeably with “peasant” or *campesino* to describe people who work the land and live in the Copán periphery. In this sense, Copán’s demographic distribution has always been limited to *Copanecos* (*mestizo* people who live in the town) and *indios*. On the other hand, the Maya, who built the Copán site, have always existed in people’s memory as an “extinct” population that represents an important part of our legacy as a nation but not a direct tie to existing populations. Therefore, the education curriculum has actually placed value in the precolonial past, but it has failed to identify and encourage ethnic ties between current and past populations in Copán. This is in part due to the mixed messages that Honduras as a nation has delivered while embracing a Mayan heritage discourse (tied to material culture) and at the same time celebrating a *mestizo* ethnic identity (Euraque 2004).

Last, although training indigenous children to become better stewards of their cultural heritage could be perceived as yet another way of perpetuating “technologies of power” (Agrawal 2005) by means of creating archaeological subjects, I commend the authors’ reflexivity in acknowledging this risk and clarifying the logic behind their approach. The authors are conscious that the notion of a “pre-Columbian Maya heritage is an archaeological construct rooted largely in a Western knowledge tradition” and are open about diversifying this trend by way of increasing the presence of indigenous people in Copán’s archaeological tradition. Through MACHI the authors have taken a first step in what will hopefully pave the way to a more collaborative involvement between foreign scholars and the people who they study. Given that the barriers in both infrastructure and ideology that have historically precluded indigenous people in Copán from accessing and adding to their own history are still a reality, it is essential to keep in mind ways to make these initiatives sustainable. Hopefully, the MACHI initiative will see its students break through

the barriers that have excluded previous generations from contributing to the writing of their history.

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McAnany and Parks offer an interesting intervention into the complex intersections of heritage, indigeneity, archaeology, tourism, and economics around Copán. Not only does the article provide contemporary human dimensions of Classic Maya sites beyond their academic interest to archaeologists, but it also offers a timely commentary on heritage protection and indigenous archaeology more generally. They consider the ways that indigeneity works, the intricate connections between identity and place, and the disenfranchisement and heritage distancing that impact Mayan communities of Central America. I found their approach to the triple concerns of conservation, cultural identity, and human livelihood respectful and thoughtful.

McAnany and Parks's work fits into the growing corpus of archaeology focused on community participation, indigenous collaboration, civic engagement, and critical pedagogy in a unique way, even though they do not draw out all of the connections or literature beyond some references to collaborative and indigenous archaeology. They did explicitly engage with the work of Brazilian educator-scholar Paulo Freire, and more archaeologists should be encouraged to follow suit. Doing so would attune the doing and teaching of archaeology to critical engagement, different kinds of literacy, and perhaps even emancipatory agendas. Such an approach promotes education for empowerment, and if the authors' long-term objectives are met, then more Ch'orti' will participate in heritage issues and interpretations. However, in the short-term, how have Ch'orti' adults and parents been incorporated into the Maya Project alongside children? Has there been much collaboration, or are the programs geared mainly to school-age children? At times, the education programs seem more like outreach or service learning, since the children are likely to be less experienced interlocutors than the adults and cannot yet weigh in on interpretive or management decisions. Still, it seems that a narrative of Mayan extinction plagues Honduran school systems as much as it does the rest of the world, who thrive on stories of collapse and disappearance. Yet, will McAnany and Parks's efforts offer only a counternarrative to those Ch'orti' children who have a chance to engage, or will it initiate a grassroots reform of educational materials mandated or generated at higher levels in Honduras?

McAnany and Parks are trying to cultivate young Ch'orti' into archaeological ways of thinking so that these community members can better protect and understand their heritage in the Copán Valley, and they also have the political goal of

reinstalling legitimate connections of the Ch'orti' to their deeper ancestral pasts. Too much emphasis on the former could be seen as an attempt to slyly protect what archaeologists hold dear by securing more local protection of global heritage, and too much focus on the latter might come across as patronizing when "archaeologists know best." I mention these as tensions within community-based archaeology overall and not as criticisms of the authors' work, since McAnany and Parks seem more sophisticated in their approach to getting locals to "buy in." Although they do not refer to it as such, I see their work as an attempt to install archaeology as a component of legitimate and local memory work in the present. People cannot simply be "taught" the ways of archaeology as a kind of finality and objectivity; instead, these ways of engaging the past must be learned, examined, critiqued, and variably deployed in collaborative or community contexts. Hopefully, McAnany and Parks seek a long-term relationship in which archaeologists and community members can share and shape approaches, goals, and interests.

McAnany and Parks demonstrate how archaeology as a place-based heritage practice may offer mechanisms to (re)link descendant groups and their ancestors' sites. This does not generate new identities, since many displaced people continue their cultural practices and traditions, but rather reanchors them to ancestral sites and landscapes from which they might have been distanced. It also gives them the option to benefit economically from tourism based on a heritage that is also narratively and physically separated from them. As the authors note, some of the most difficult land loss has happened in the last 100 years rather than during the Spanish invasion of the sixteenth century. Archaeology can do work to turn back this more recent tide.

This article highlights a variety of issues and outcomes that more archaeologists working with, for, and in indigenous communities need to consider. How do we engage youth in these communities? What does collaboration look like? Do archaeologists and communities share goals of heritage preservation, and should they? How do we make archaeology matter? I commend McAnany and Parks for illuminating some possible answers and for involving locals, particularly indigenous people, in Mesoamerican archaeology in ways that go beyond the more common practice of simply paying laborers and excavators. They remind us how archaeology can be a positive force when done with a community focus.

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McAnany and Parks consider the intersection of archaeolog-

ical knowledge and contemporary notions of identity and indigeneity around the World Heritage site of Copán in western Honduras, which has long been at the core of what Honduran Historian Darío Euraque (2004) has dubbed *Mayanización*. McAnany and Parks introduce two new concepts to the analysis of these issues. First, they use “heritage distancing” as a rhetorical device to bring attention to the social and political distance between the past and the present. Second, they use “archaeoscape” to pinpoint the “physical and ideological intersection of the past with the present,” which also presumably involves the social actors (i.e., stakeholders) that express and experience those intersections. These two concepts are dynamically linked: archaeoscape represents the materialization of heritage distancing (e.g., heritage distancing is a long-term structural process that becomes tangible and durable in the archaeoscape). The subjects of this article are the “casualties”—Ch’orti’ Mayan children and the communities that raise them—of the ever-widening gap between the archaeological past (as socially constructed by “scientists”) and the everyday realities of human lives and livelihoods in western Honduras.

Situated in the theoretical context of the political economy of cultural heritage, the article is a reflexive look at the authors’ experiences with building capacity to produce scientific knowledge emerging from communities and people who experience the consequences of structural inequalities. This kind of “research-based advocacy” or “academically engaged science” is needed particularly in Honduras (especially since the 2009 coup d’état; Euraque 2010) to democratize research by making research tools and results available to vulnerable populations.

The article describes what Jean Schensul (2010) and others (e.g., Barker 2004; Low and Merry 2010) refer to as university-engaged scholarship, in which the products and processes of research are deployed to educate and engage different publics in existing knowledge as well as in the production and use of knowledge. MACHI in general and the Maya Project in particular could be characterized as action research, which “focuses on value driven, collaboratively conducted research that transforms relationships between oppressed or marginalized communities and the organizations that serve them, so as to improve their socio-political conditions” (Schensul 2010: 309). According to Schensul (2010:309), action research involves long-term commitments with communities, stems from “authentic” needs and perspectives of the people, is rooted in local culture and history, develops plans for sustainability, and involves reciprocal learning and reflexivity at multiple levels, among other characteristics. In this regard, the Maya Project could be described as action research.

If the Maya Project is indeed action research, then we have two concerns for its efficacy. First, we wonder whether the fundamental problems that the project aims to address are those identified by community members. The problems—namely, heritage distancing and archaeological resource conservation—are clearly recognized in other parts of the Maya

world (e.g., Breglia 2006; Magnoni, Ardren, and Hutson 2007) but not necessarily by contemporary Honduran Ch’orti’ communities. This does not mean that such problems do not exist or have not been identified by Ch’orti’ groups. Still, community participation in identifying the research problems is an important issue moving forward, because a number of recent community-based research projects in the Maya region and elsewhere, while well intentioned, have advocated for values that are not necessarily shared by community members, thereby aiming the moral ecology of the global North toward the South. If heritage distancing and archaeological resource conservation are specifically identified for this region by local communities, then it would seem that the Maya Project should incorporate to a greater extent existing national cultural patrimony legislation into its efforts.

Second, we wonder whether the Honduran Ch’orti’ communities feel that they have the capacity to negotiate the agendas of the researchers, as the researchers put their own reputations and relationships “on the line” in service to both university and community. Commentary and reflection on this subject in future publications would make for an interesting opportunity to theorize university-engaged scholarship, which has received scant theoretical attention in anthropology.

These concerns aside, McAnany and Parks squarely demonstrate that the social context of contemporary archaeological practice has changed, even over the past few years. Archaeologists, like other anthropologists, must work collaboratively with “local” populations, descendant communities, and other stakeholder groups and share in the enterprise of knowledge creation if archaeological work is to be relevant to more than a privileged few (Stottman 2010). McAnany and Parks suggest one path forward for southern Mesoamerica, and we commend them for their brave efforts to move beyond “business as usual.”

Reply

We write these comments on the morning after one of us—McAnany—was privileged to participate in a long conversation with Darío Euraque, the noted Honduran historian who was forced to leave his position as director of the IHAH in the wake of the 2009 coup that removed President Zelaya from office. As documented in his autobiographical account of the coup (Euraque 2010), Euraque’s efforts to alter the national discourse by broadening the scope and inclusiveness of cultural heritage launched Honduras on a course too radical for many with vested interests in the status quo. The national branding and commoditization of Honduras as a space of Maya people and ancient Maya places (especially stelae) successfully positioned Honduras within a lucrative international tourism industry but left little space in which to construct a realistic national dialogue about race and ethnic

diversity in a country that includes a large population of non-Maya indigenous groups and Afro-Caribbeans.

A great irony of the Mayanization process that Euraque has critiqued so eloquently resides in the fact that, based on linguistic evidence and cultural practice, the one group that can claim a historical connection to those who built Copán remains marginalized from this World Heritage place. But poverty and lack of education present real obstacles to the enfranchisement of indigenous peoples in the operation of a place where the shots are called by World Bank officials and archaeologists from North American institutions. How can the playing field be leveled? We reasoned that education programs within the *aldeas* surrounding Copán might be a step toward restoring a balance of power. In this spirit, the workshops commenced as we discussed in the text of our article.

We wish to thank all our colleagues who wrote commentaries about the education program, and we single out several issues raised by commentators for further discussion. We note that the doing of what Jean Schensul (2010) has called “third-sector science,” in which anthropologists engage with local communities in grassroots efforts to address structural inequalities and social disparities, is considerably more complicated in practice than in theory.

We are heartened in particular by comments from our Latin American colleagues, particularly the comparative perspective that Lizama—working with indigenous Yukatek groups in Mexico—brings to the problem of heritage distancing. Another perspective—that of the IHAH—is expressed by Martinez, who identifies shared decision making among stakeholders as the only viable route to sustainable conservation. We echo this position (Parks and McAnany 2011) and thank Martinez for addressing the need for a balance of power (and of responsibility) between the state and local communities. While we take issue with the characterization of the Maya workshops as “indoctrination”—a term used by Rodriguez-Mejia and discussed further shortly—we applaud his candid discussion of racial discrimination and barriers to expanded livelihood opportunities within Honduras. Not surprisingly, the ways in which structural inequalities are lived and suffered on a daily basis seem to be perceived more acutely by our Latin American colleagues.

Wells and Figueroa wonder whether the aim of the Maya workshops—to reduce heritage distancing—is compatible with community goals. In response, we note that repeated occupation of the entrance to the archaeological park of Copán by Ch’orti’ activist groups suggests that reclaiming this heritage—and all the benefits that accrue from a close association with a Copán past—is a high priority for many Ch’orti’ people. Metz—who has spent his career studying Ch’orti’ peoples—suggests that education programs carry the risk of producing further looting at archaeological sites. While one can never predict the result of education programs, in our experience the lack of discussion about conservation issues promotes looting, as has happened in Belize and El Petén, Guatemala. In those locales, looting quickly accelerated when

archaeological projects pulled out, leaving behind a community of skilled excavators who had never been engaged by project members in a discussion of the value of conservation to local communities.

Third-sector (social) science occupies a space within the academy that attempts to bridge the divide between research and activism and hopes to carve out a new hybrid terrain. This endeavor can be particularly challenging for archaeologists, who juggle the ethical demands of a close association with things of the past with ethical responsibilities to the people of the present. Maca suggests that this balancing act could be enhanced by “consciously transforming the program from educational outreach to explicit research project” in which, for example, a professional ethnographer studies the program and its impact. We have no objection to this suggestion, but in the spirit of maintaining low overhead on program costs we opted to perform impact surveys in conjunction with our collaborative organization. The institutional review board of Boston University and later of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, approved all questionnaires.

Several commentators worried whether Ch’orti’ children were, in effect, being force-fed a diet of cultural heritage that may not be of their own choosing. Mortensen, in particular, expressed the notion that Ch’orti’ people have the right to define their heritage and their relationship with the past. We could not agree more, and we add that Ch’orti’ children also have a right to information about the past that will facilitate thinking and making decisions about their relationship to it. Can we not allow Ch’orti’s to have the final word on what the workshops mean, if anything, to their lives, identities, and future livelihood prospects?

We thank Anne Pyburn for citing many pertinent bibliographic sources that did not appear in the text of our article due to space limitations. In response to her query regarding the criteria for selection of Arte Acción as our collaborative organization, we can state that in this case—and others—we seek to work with NGOs with a mission similar to that of MACHI and a sense of responsibility to local communities. Increasingly, we search for partner organizations that are operated by and accountable to indigenous peoples, but this was not the case with Arte Acción. In a region in which indigenous peoples are grappling with the difficulty of regaining a language that is perilously close to extinction, the accusation that the three local facilitators (workshop teachers) may not be Ch’orti’ because they do not speak Ch’orti’ strangely parallels local efforts to dismiss indigenous rights because of the absence of a spoken language.

Nicholas comments that the Maya program is the inverse of the “notorious residential school model” employed in twentieth-century North America that attempted to separate indigenous peoples from their cultural heritage. We feel that this is an apt contrast. Nicholas also voices concern about the sustainability of the program in the absence of external assistance and funding. We acknowledge the funding challenge, although we note that since Arte Acción shuttered its office

more than a year ago we have received at least four proposals (encouraged but not solicited) to continue heritage programs in the Copán region. But, as Silliman notes, the only surefire way to achieve sustainable change is through grassroots re-
 form of educational materials. We are currently engaged in such efforts in El Petén, Guatemala, in conjunction with a local NGO, Fundación ProPetén, and under agreement with the Ministry of Education. Even within this atmosphere of reform and transformation, financial challenges still impact essential program elements, such as training for teachers and textbooks for students. Silliman asks how adults and parents are integrated into this conversation about cultural heritage. We acknowledge the difficulty of including parents who have limited time for reflection on issues of identity and cultural heritage. In Belize, parents instructed us to take workshops into the schools, and that is what we have done.

In the end, as Wells and Figueroa note, perhaps the most significant outcome of this program resides in the manner in which it alters the social context of contemporary archaeological practice, and hopefully it is a harbinger of changes in the “rules of engagement” between archaeologists and local communities. If such practice results in greater inclusivity, then it will be a small contribution toward the strong and pluralistic Honduras that Darío Euraque has long hoped to foster.

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